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CONSERVATION BUFFER INITIATIVE

The National Conservation Buffer Initiative is a multiyear effort by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to establish conservation buffers such as Filter Strips and Riparian Buffers near environmentally sensitive areas. Under the leadership of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA has pledged to help landowners install buffers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

Conservation buffers are a common sense way to protect valuable land and demonstrate a personal commitment to conservation. Buffers simply are small areas or strips of land in permanent vegetation designed to slow and absorb runoff, pollutants, and chemicals. In addition to providing environmental benefits to soil, water, and air quality, buffers can also provide excellent habitat for bobwhite quail and other wildlife species when wildlife friendly vegetation is utilized. Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG's) such as switchgrass, big bluestem, indiangrass, and other species provide good cover for wildlife and are excellent for erosion control.

Landowners in Tennessee have recently established thousands of buffer acres with USDA programs that include wildlife friendly vegetation such as Native NWSG's. NWSG's have now become the most popular cover type selected for filter strips with over 80 percent being established in this wildlife friendly mixture. Cooperative efforts between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and non-profit conservation groups such as Quail Unlimited have recently helped to increase landowner participation in USDA programs that favor wildlife friendly practices.

For specific information on conservation buffers, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service located in almost every county in Tennessee. An on-line directory is available on this web site.

In the photo below, a landowner in Chester County, Tennessee, is shown with his conservation buffer established with Native Warm Season Grasses.



